

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ADDIS 01031 031618Z

ACTION AF-04

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7530

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 1031

STADIS//////////

LIMDIS

FOR AF AND AF/E

EE.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, ET, SO

SUBJ: STATEMENTS CONCERNING MENGISTU'S ASSURANCES

SUMMARY: MENGISTU'S ASSURANCES RE CROSSING BORDER ARE NOT QUITE SO CATEROGICAL AS WASHINGTON IS NOW, PERHAPS FOR LEGITIMATE U.S. REASONS, CHOOSING TO DEPICT THEM. A SOMALI FIGHTING RETREAT AND/OR FAILURE TO WITHDRAW FROM SOUTHERN OGADEN COULD JUSTIFY BORDER CROSSING IN EPMG MINDS WITHOUT BETRAYING MENGISTU'S PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ASSURANCES. ADDITIONALLY, DISCIPLINE OF MILITIA DOES NOT NECESSARILY MATCH EPMG INTENTIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. I REALIZE THERE MAY BE USG IMPERATIVES FOR CLAIMING THAT MENGISTU REASSURED PRES. CARTER PERSONALLY THAT EPMG FORCES WOULD NOT CROSS SOMALI BORDER. BUT WE SHOULD BE CLEAR IN OUR OWN MINDS THAT HE DID NOT GO QUITE THAT FAR. AS RECORDS SHOW FROM MENGISTU'S DISCUSSIONS WITH CODEL TSONGAS/BONKER AND THE AARON MISSION, ALL HE SAID WAS THAT IT WAS NOT EPMG "AIM" OR "INTENTION" TO INVADE SOMALIA. IN A WAR SUCH AS THIS, THERE IS OFTEN
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A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN INTENTION AND EXECUTION. ADDITIONALLY, WE HAVE CONSISTENTLY REPORTED THAT THERE IS CONSIDERABLE DOUBT IN ADDIS, EVEN STATED BY SOVIET AMBASSADOR, THAT TROOPS, PARTICULARLY MILITIA, CAN BE RESTRAINED IN THEIR PURSUIT OF SOMALIS.

2. WE DO BELIEVE MENGISTU IS SINCERE, I.E., FINDS IT IN

ETHIOPIA'S INTEREST, ABOUT NOT CROSSING LINE IF SOMALIS
WITHDRAW SIMULTANEOUSLY AT ALL POINTS IN OGADEN, BUT IF
THEY RETREAT FIGHTING ON NORHTERN FRONT AND/OR DO NOT
WITHDRAW FARTHER SOUTH, THEN THERE IS A DISCTINCT POSSI-
BILITY EPMG FORCES WILL FIGHT INTO SOMALIA. THEY WILL
PERHAPS APPLY PRINCIPLE OF HOT PURSUIT, BUT THEY MAY
ALSO WANT TO USE OCCUPIED TERRITORY AS BARGAINING CHIP
FOR RETURN OF SOUTHERN OGADEN TERRITORY. WHAT IS TRUE
IS THAT NO ONE HERE TO OUR KNOWLEDGE FEELS THAT ETHIOPIA
IS REALLY GOING TO EXERT IRREDENTIST CLAIM AGAINST
NORTHERN SOMALIA ALTHOUGH SUCH AMBITIONS ARE HINTED AT
PERIODICALLY AND BEAR SOME HISTORIAL VALIDITY.

3. EMBASSY LEAVES FURTHER DISTRIBUTION TO AF'S
DISCRETION.
MATHERON

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NNN

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